DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 297 865 PS 017 496

AUTHOR Czech, Rosemary Hughes
TITLE Homework as a Means of Improving Reading Achievement of First Grade Students by Involving Parents and School in a Cooperative Effort.
PUB DATE 88
NOTE 68p.; Ed.D. Practicum, Nova University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; *Computer Uses in Education; Educational Improvement; *Elementary School Students; Grade 1; Home Visits; *Homework; Intervention; *Parent Role; Primary Education; *Reading Achievement; *Student Motivation; Workshops
IDENTIFIERS *Parents as Teachers

ABSTRACT

A practicum designed to help 10 first-graders successfully complete their homework, and to involve their parents as teachers at home, was implemented by a school social worker who was a member of a multidisciplinary child study team that assisted students with academic, social, and behavioral problems. Many children referred to the child study team for academic reasons had difficulty completing homework assignments. Test scores indicated that children who did not complete homework assignments performed poorly on standardized tests. Parents of these children frequently requested information on ways to help their children at home. Practicum objectives were met through: (1) use of a computer to chart the completion of homework assignments; (2) a system of rewards designed to motivate students; and (3) workshops and home visits that trained parents to assist their children. Practicum evaluation data indicated that all objectives were met. In addition, results of pre- and posttesting with the Ginn Reading Program Level Test indicated that homework was an effective means of improving reading achievement among grade 1 students. Related material is provided in 10 appendixes. (RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED297865

PRACTICUM REPORT

Center for the
Advancement of Education
Ed.D. Program

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☒ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Homework as a Means of Improving Reading Achievement of First Grade Students by Involving Parents and School in a Cooperative Effort

by

Rosemary Hughes Czech

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Rosemary Hughes Czech
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

3301 College Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33314
305/475-7300

PS 019496

NOVA UNIVERSITY

Homework as a Means of Improving Reading Achievement of First Grade Students by Involving Parents and School in a Cooperative Effort

by

Rosemary Hughes Czech

Cluster XXVI

A Practicum I Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program
in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1988

PS 017 996

FILMED FROM
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

AUG 29 1988

PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

Verifier : Paul V. Lacity

Paul V. Lacity, Ed. D.

Superintendent
Title

Atlantic City Public Schools
1809 Pacific Avenue
Address

Atlantic City, New Jersey 08401
City and State

August 1, 1988
Date

This practicum report was submitted by Rosemary Hughes Czech under the direction of the advisor listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

5/12/89
Date of Final Approval of Report

JoEllen Salce Rogers, Ph.D.,
Adviser

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....iii

ABSTRACT.....v

Chapter

I INTRODUCTION.....1

Description of Community.....1
Writer's Work Setting and Role.....3

II STUDY OF THE PROBLEM.....6

Problem Description.....6
Problem Documentation.....7
Causative Analysis.....8
The Related Literature.....9

III ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS.....21

Statement of General Goals.....21
Behavioral Expectations.....21
Evaluation Instruments.....22
Mechanism for Recording Unexpected Events.....24

IV SOLUTION STRATEGY.....26

Description of Previously Attempted Solutions.....26
Solution Strategy.....30
Report of Action Taken.....34

V RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS...38

Results.....38
Conclusions.....40
Recommendations.....44
Dissemination.....45

REFERENCES.....46

Appendices

A FACULTY QUESTIONNAIRE.....50

B RESULTS OF FACULTY QUESTIONNAIRE.....53

C WORKSHOP AGENDA I.....57

D WORKSHOP AGENDA II.....59

E WORKSHOP AGENDA III.....61

F PARENT WORKSHOP EVALUATION FORM.....63

G PRE AND POST TEST TABLE.....65

H HOMEWORK MANAGERIAL CHARTS.....67

I PARENT INFORMATION PACKET.....71

J WEEKLY LOG.....73

Abstract

Homework as a means of Improving Reading Achievement of First Grade Students by Involving Parents and School in a Cooperative Effort. Czech, Rosemary H., 1988: Practicum Report, Nova University Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: First Grade/ Primary Grades/ Elementary School/ Homework/ Home Assignments/ Parent Involvement/ Parent Participation

This practicum addressed the problem of first grade students not completing homework. The primary goal was to assist students in successfully completing their homework. The second goal was to involve parents in assisting their children with their homework by teaching them methods that could be employed at home. In addressing these goals the writer implemented a system using a computer to chart the completion of homework. A system of rewards was utilized to motivate students. Parents were trained to assist their child through workshops and home visitation.

All of the objectives of the practicum were met. Results indicate that homework is an effective means of improving reading achievement with first grade pupils.

Chapter I

Introduction

Description of Community

The school in which the practicum takes place is located in an urban resort on the Northeastern seaboard. Within the last ten years the population of 40,000 swells considerably each day as 65,000 tourists visit the city. Devoic of other major industries tourism is the primary economic base. Prior to 1976 employment was seasonal. The increase of tourism has made year round employment a possibility for many people. However like many urban cities in the Northeast there are still some hardcore unemployed people within the city. Because they lack sufficient education,skills or work experience, they are unable to find or maintain employment. It is a city of contrasts with the very wealthy and the socially and economically deprived. The city has for example despite being the wealthiest city in the state, the highest rate of infant mortality and the highest rate of teenage pregnancies.

The city is on a barrier island. The island itself

is comprised of four municipalities. The three other municipalities serve as bedroom communities, fairly affluent suburbs. These communities pay tuition at the high school level while maintaing separate elementary school systems. Although all four communities share the same island there is little sharing of municipal services.

The greatest regional growth has been in the suburban communities of the mainland. The county is now the fastest growing in the state. There has been new housing both with single family homes and condominiums. These new communities are enjoying rapid economic growth as well as growth in educational services and facilities. Although the city has attempted to build moderate income housing it has failed to attract the middle class. This may also be in part due to the need for replacement of antiquated school facilities. Although in the planning stages it will be at least a decade before the major educational reforms are completed.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The school district is comprised of nine elementary, two junior high schools and a high school. There are 4364 students enrolled in kindergarten through eighth grade. There is an enrollment at the high school level of 2098. Fifteen percent of the school aged population is white,another fourteen percent is Hispanic and sixty-six percent of the population is Black. The others are Asian,American Indian,Pacific Islander or other groups.

The school is part of the state's public school system and accredited through the Middle States evaluation. In the past year the local school board which had previously been appointed by the mayor became an elected board. The board's priorities for this year center around an effort to locate suitable land upon which to build a new high school. This year has also seen a new superintendent and several administrative changes are already being put into effect.

The Practicum is to take place in a unique school in the district,which consists of a regular elementary school of kindergarten through sixth grade. The school however also houses a preschool handicapped program,

three self-contained trainable mentally retarded classes and two classes for emotionally disturbed students. The faculty has tried to provide mainstreaming experiences for special education students as well as to provide students with opportunities to benefit from association with their handicapped peers.

The school consists of a Black female administrator. There are seven elementary teachers, seven special education teachers and three compensatory/bilingual education teachers. A child study team consisting of a school psychologist, learning consultant and social worker have offices in the building although they service students districtwide.There are four male teachers and thirteen female teachers. The faculty consists of five Black teachers and twelve Caucasian teachers.

The writer is a social worker on a multidisciplinary team consisting of a school psychologist and learning disabilities teacher-consultant. The writer assists in the evaluation and classification of handicapped students. Under the provisions of P1.94-142 the main responsibilities are to work with children who have been referred due to academic, social and behavioral problems. This entails

not only working with the child in school but with the child and the family in the home environment.

Additional responsibilities include serving as a liaison for the educational system and the human services system. Frequently the families seen by the writer encompass more needs than those which can be addressed by the school system. Medical needs, housing and employment needs as well as mental health services are often as much a part of understanding a child's difficulties in school since they reflect what resources the family has to aid in the child's development. Part of the writer's responsibilities is to provide information and referral services and case management services to families of handicapped students. The writer is responsible for home visitation, parent conferences and is a consultant for both the teaching and administrative staff in the district. The writer also represents the school district on coalitions for abused children, teenage pregnancy and works with parent education.

Chapter II

Study of the Problem

Problem Description

Children are not completing homework assignments. Many of the children that are referred to the child study team for academic reasons are also children who have difficulty completing homework assignments. It had come to the writer's attention during interviews with parents of children who were having difficulty academically that one of the most frequently voiced requests from the parents was for assistance on ways in which a parent can help the child at home. In school a frequently voiced complaint from teachers was that children were not completing homework assignments. Test scores also indicated that the chilren who were not completing homework assignments were also the ones who were doing poorly on standardized tests.

Teachers often cited a lack of cooperation from the home. Due to current economic conditions many times

both parents work. Additionally there is a high percentage of single parent households. It seemed that the school needed to take some steps to bridge the gap between home and school. By early intervention at the first grade level a cooperative program between parents,teachers and students would assist children in obtaining good study habits at home. It would also encourage parents to become involved with their child's education and provide opportunities for growth with both parent and child. It would also encourage the child to develop a positive image of oneself.

Documentation

In order to provide documentation of the problem stated in the previous section, the writer surveyed twenty primary grade teachers throughout the district. A questionnaire (see Appendix A) was given to each teacher. Teachers were asked to evaluate their reading program as well as parental involvement in the reading program and the completion of tasks assigned for home. Whereas teachers found the reading program effective 90% expressed dissatisfaction with the support of parents

and the completion of homework.

Causative Analysis

Lack of communication between home and school regarding assignments and teacher expectations, differences in the learning environment between mothers and teachers, inability of parents to work with their own children due to their lack of educational or other resources, socioeconomic and cultural values may be considered as possible causes of the problem.

One of the aspects of education which the writer as a social worker addresses on a daily basis is the influence of the home environment. This would include for example provision of a supportive environment for learning. Is the environment well lighted and well ventilated? This does not mean that the area has to be an ideal child's room but a kitchen table will suffice. It would also necessitate an environment with few distractions such as no loud television or radio.

Other important aspects include parents' value of language acquisition. Depending upon the ethnic composition of the family with bilingual children there may be more motivation to learn a second language while

some groups are culturally resistant.

The Related Literature

The literature suggests that parents can be taught how to assist their children at home to reach their potential through providing them with information on child development and methods of working with their child.

The literature review reveals that there is a direct relationship between the home environment and a child's academic success. In the beginning stages of this review the writer will examine some of the aspects of the home environment as they relate to achievement. Having defined what particular aspects have a significant relationship between home and school achievement the writer will focus on discussing what kinds of interventions may be appropriate to assist parents in creating a home environment which is conducive to learning. Lastly the literature discusses that there may be some myths and misconceptions as to which aspects of home life are significant and directs the research to consider those areas where more information may be required.

van Doorninck,Caldwell,Wright and Frankenburg (1981) studied the relationship between the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME) and school achievement. There are forty-five items in the HOME which defined the following: Emotional and verbal responsivity of mother, avoidance of restriction and punishment,organization of physical environment,provision of appropriate play materials and opportunities for variety in daily stimulation. The HOME was administered in the home through conversational style. The interviewers had been previously trained.

Children at twelve months of age and their families were given the HOME. They were then compared five to nine years later with the children's elementary school achievement. The results supported the predictive value of the twelve month HOME for low-income families. Among the most predictive subscales were the emotional and verbal responsivity of the mother and provision of appropriate play materials.

Parkinson,Wallis,Prince and Harvey (1982) researched some aspects of home life which have been found to correlate with children's scores on a variety of developmental tests. Using an adaptation of the HOME for British families the study involved twenty children.

They were also assessed for their cognitive abilities and school progress. Through informal conversation the families were observed for an hour and a half to two hour period. Aspects of family life which showed a significant correlation to a child's performance included parental encouragement for the child's achievement,activeness,creativity and verbal participation. Other significant factors are the families interest in intellectual pursuits, as well as family rules and discipline. Moreover the study also demonstrated that social class is not always a way of measuring the home environment.

Children's home environment prior to school entrance age has a major influence on a child's school achievement even after the child has experienced three years of schooling (Shea and Hanes,1977). This investigation traced one hundred fifty-three children through kindergarten, first and second grade. The sample populations were taken from two communities. The first group was a rural population in the northwestern U.S. and was primarily white. The second sample was from a city in the southwestern U.S. most of whom were black. A parent educator rated the home on nine dimensions: expectations for child's schooling; awareness of child's

development; rewards for intellectual attainment;press for language development;availability and use of supplies for language development,learning opportunities outside the home;materials for learning in the home; reading press and trust in school.

They demonstrated across communities that a number of variables are significant especially reading press, press for language development and opportunities for learning. They also found that these items were also the best predictors of achievement across grade levels.

Miller (1973) researched over a four year period the relationships between home environmental factors and children's reading achievement in the primary grades. Among the factors were maternal language style, maternal teaching style, children's daily schedules and home prereading activities.

Among the results of the study were that there is a significant relationship between maternal language as evaluated by the scale of complex verb preference and reading achievement. There is also a significant relationship between maternal teaching style and reading achievement. Among the lower class there was a significant relationship between children's daily schedules and primary grade reading achievement. Since

this article was based on a longitudinal study there arises the question as to whether a primary grade teacher especially skilled in teaching reading could influence the achievement of students and if so how?

Steinert, Campbell and Kiely (1981) compared the teaching styles of mothers and teachers with good and poor readers. An expected outcome was that by comparing the teaching behaviors of mothers and trained teachers certain behaviors could be isolated and then taught to mothers that would make them effective educators of their own children. The study found that there is a significant difference in the learning environment between mothers and teachers. The differences were expressed in terms of information transmitted, feedback and the amount of independent activity they requested from the child. The findings suggest that mothers should be taught principles of reinforcement and task structuring.as well as how to transmit information effectively.

Bercovici and Feshbach (1973) examined the teaching styles of successful readers and those of problem readers in the first grade. They found that mothers of non-readers spent less time orienting children to the task,organized the task less, were more controlling and

directive, used more negative reinforcement and were more task intrusive. The authors noted that the behaviors of the mothers of non-readers were contrary to Piagetian theory.

Lamme and Olmsted (1976) took a look at family reading habits. They found that children in families that owned and watched more television tended to have children that felt negatively toward reading. On the other hand children who had someone read to them at home invariably watched less television.

Among other factors availability of books in the home, trips to libraries, bookstores were significantly higher for good readers than those who perceived themselves as poor readers. The better readers also reported seeing other family members read at home. This study also noted that there was more positive reinforcement given to a child when reading in the homes of those children who were successful readers.

Hoffman (1982) examined the teaching strategies that parents use with their children. Tape recordings of parents and their children during reading and writing activities in the home monitored the interactions. Parents were directive with their children and responses were corrective rather than supportive of the children's

efforts.

Strom,Griswold and Slaughter (1981) began with the assumption that parents from different backgrounds have different needs. The study examined the differences in Anglo, Black and Mexican-American parents in the southwestern United States. The major source of variance among the three ethnic groups was that between Anglo and Black mothers. Anglos consistently derived the highest mean scores on control,creativity,play and teaching while Blacks obtained the lowest scores.The study also found that the most pronounced differences among the ethnic groups was in the area of control. Blacks exhibited a greater need to direct their children's behavior than did either the Mexican-American or Anglo mothers.

Besides finding differences in the cultural subgroups substantive differences were identified between the three socio-economic groups in respect to mothers' perceptions of themselves as teachers of their children. Lower-class mothers,it was indicated, tended to have the greatest difficulty carrying on conversations with children followed by middle and then upper-class mothers,who expressed the least difficulty of all. (Strom ,et al.1981).

This particular study also suggests the need for parent education in understanding child growth and learning. For instance,the desire for extensive control of children's language and behavior may severely limit exploratory behavior and suppress creative intellectual development.

Moxley-Haegert and Serbin (1983) based their study on the need for parents to maintain a commitment to carry out or complete programs for early stimulation and remediation of developmentally delayed children. They felt that home programs are often very time consuming and may demand life style changes of the parent.

It appears from this study that parental education focusing on observing and recognizing children's developmental progressions was effective in motivating parents to participate in the implementation of home treatment programs for their delayed children. Parents' increased ability to recognize their children's developmental gains may have made small improvements in development more "reinforcing" as motivators. This was suggested by the high level of participation by the parents after receiving developmental education. The main reason for training parents to observe and recognize developmental progress was to help the

children progress in appropriate sequential development and to facilitate the acquisition of specific skills(Moxley-Haegert and Serbin,1983).

Seginer (1983) found that parents' expectations are both a cause and effect of children's academic achievement. Parents' aspirations and especially those unfulfilled play a central part in the explanation that dynamic theories accord relationships between parents and their children. The same process by which parents incorporate the expectations they have for their children no doubt also pertains to the educational domain.The literature on parents' expectations indicate that home-based reinforcement of school behavior is effective for a wide range of ages, educational programs, target behaviors and types of reinforcement.

Swick and Land (1984) conducted a longitudinal study to assess the long term effects on pupils whose parents participated in a program stressing parent involvement. They studied the achievement of kindergarten children over a three year period. Students were selected under the assumption that they would most likely experience difficulty in school tasks due to low test scores.

Searls (1982) examined parental tutoring on a first

grade level to determine if it would produce significant increases in student reading. The study continued to look at the progress in the second grade comparing those students who had received parental tutoring and those who had not.

Goldenberg (1984) utilized case studies to show that parents are interested in their children's progress and were willing to work with their children at home. Reading success in school required the involvement of parents on a consistent basis with the reading curriculum at home.

Ellis (1983) investigated the use of home learning tasks. Two areas of achievement were studied, namely reading and mathematics. Parent/child dyads participated in the study. All of the children had kindergarten experience and all were from lower socio-economic black families.

Marshall and Herbert (1981) used a recorded telephone message to encourage parents to help their children learn basic skills. A two to three minute telephone message recapped the week's classroom work on basic skills. Parents could also leave a message to call if they wished to arrange a meeting with the teacher.

Halasa (1983) evaluated the impact of workshops for

aides and parents. Parents were also involved through a monthly newsletter and monthly meetings. Children were then evaluated using the school district reading program.

Ediger (1981) focused on ways parents can help their preschool and elementary school-age children in laymen's terms. Methods that parents can use with their children are suggested for reading and writing. Cooperation between parents and teachers is emphasized.

Wade (1980) conducted a parent education program with the parents of fifty first grade children. Parents were asked to attend ten workshops and work ten minutes per day with their child. The project took place over a thirty week period.

Blai (1985) suggests way in which parents can improve communication with their children. The author also suggests ways of improving parental involvement in all areas of the school curriculum. Parents are also advised as to what may be potential learning disabilities and how to recognize them.

In conclusion, a review of the literature showed that parental involvement in the educational process contibutes to academic achievement. Children whose parents read to them , talk to them, assist with homework and provide activities for learning at home are more successful in school.

Chapter III

Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments

Statement of General Goals

The development of good home study habits is important both for the child's present and future success. Parent cooperation is essential if homework is to be completed. The primary goal of this practicum was to assist ten first grade students in completing their homework assignments and successfully complete a minimum of two levels in reading during a three month period.

Behavioral Expectations

An analysis of the literature revealed that there is a direct relationship between the home environment and academic achievement. A program was needed that would provide an opportunity to improve academic skills as well as one that would affect changes in the home environment. Therefore,the following specific behavioral objectives were chosen for this Practicum:

By February,1988 ten students will have been selected to participate in the program based upon reading level and failure to comply with homework policy.

By February,1988 ten students will have been tested at current reading level through use of chapter pre and post test as measured by the Ginn Reading Program Level Test.

By March,1988 the parents of the ten students will have completed three workshops on how to assist their children with homework.

By April,1988 the writer will have made three home visits to monitor the implementation of the program.

By April,1988 seven out of the ten students will progress a minimum of two chapters in reading as measured by the Ginn Reading Program Level Test.

By April,1988 seven of the ten students will complete successfully all homework assignments.

Evaluation Instruments

The first objective was measured by a tabulation over a four week period of those children who did not

complete their homework over a four week period and who were reading below grade level as stated in teacher records.

The second objective was measured by the Ginn Reading Program Level test. The Ginn Reading Program is a standardized test designed to measure skills in comprehension,vocabulary,decoding and study skills. The level tests may be used as pretests to determine where the child is and whether he or she is proficient in skills for the next level. In this sense the level test is a diagnostic tool. The test is administered through a multiple choice method. Depending upon the level there may be between forty and sixty items. A passing score of 80% is required for any child to be eligible for the next level. The level test may also be used as a posttest to determine if the student has achieved mastery of the skills on that level and may begin to learn new skills. As the children are in the first grade level tests will range from readiness level to preprimer level.

The third objective was measured by a parent evaluation sheet (see Appendix F). Parents were required to attend workshops where attendance was taken. The evaluation form would determine if the workshops were

meeting the needs of parents.

Objective four was measured by utilizing a case study method based upon the Home Obsevation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME),a stanardized test. There are forty-five items in the HOME which define the following: Emotional and verbal responsivity of the mother, avoidance and restriction of punishment,organization of the physical environment, provision of appropriate play materials and opportunities for daily stimulation. The HOME is administered in a conversational style.

Objective five was measured by utilizing the previously mentioned Ginn Reading Program Level Test. For this objective it will be used as a posttest. The results will be shown in a table (see Appendix G).

The sixth objective was measured by tabulation. There are three managerial charts which measured homework as complete,correct and neat (see Appendix H).

Mechanism for Recording Unexpected Events

This project took place over an extended period of time. A mechanism for unexpected events was needed to record such occurrences. The author utilized a weekly

Chapter IV

Solution Strategy

Description of Previously Attempted Solutions

Studies of the home environment focus on several factors which encourage achievement in school. These include verbal interaction between parent and child,provision of materials and an environment conducive to learning, and spending time reading to one's child (van Doorninck et al.1981;Parkinson et al. 1982;Shea and Hanes,1977). Besides these factors there is also a relationship to maternal teaching styles. The literature suggests that mothers can be taught methods to be teachers of their own children. They can be taught for example how to give directions to their children,how to positively rather than negatively reinforce their child's efforts. Mothers can also be taught how to read to their child. Parents also need to understand that it is alright for children to experiment and to take their time to learn.(Miller,1973;Steinert et al. 1981;Bercovici and Feshbach,1973).

Among the strategies to be employed are parent education programs that take into account cultural differences (Strom,et al.1981). Parent education log (see Appendix J) to document the successes and failures of the week.

programs also need to focus on teaching parents how children learn in a sequential pattern and helping parents recognize developmental gains (Moxley-Haegert and Serbin,1983). Seigner (1983) advocates home visitation. Reinforcement at home aids in involving parents in the educational process.

It is interesting to note that while social class is not the only category to suggest difficulty with school achievement, lower socio-economic status families appear to be at a higher risk (Parkinson,et al. 1982). It is important to note that both Black families and lower-SES families tend to control their children's play language activities and behavior.

Piaget states that the process of cognitive development is a continuous interaction between the child and his environment. The parent who limits the child's explorations through a controlling and directive style and gives negative feedback may adversely affect the child's academic achievement as well as general coping behavior (Bercovici and Feshbach,1973).

While the research is helpful in identifying some of the problems more research seems to be needed which demonstrate what kinds of interventions are successful in modifying the home environment or changing maternal

teaching styles. This question of parents as teachers needs to be explored more fully. What kinds of programs assists parents to become the primary educators of their children? And do maternal teaching styles have an effect on a child's overall cognitive ability? Are the factors in the home environment that have been identified as necessary for achievement ignore other factors such as family dysfunction or social problems such as unemployment,substance abuse,poor nutrition or other problems directly related to poverty?

Following the review of the literature this writer believes that parents need to be educated about child development. Workshops by themselves do not necessarily produce a significant relationship between parental involvement and student achievement (Wade, 1980). Seigner (1983) and Moxley-Haegert and Serbin (1983) advocate that home visitation and home reinforcement are necessary. Since homework is a continuation of what happens in school it is the writer's belief that parents need to be invited to participate in educational programs in the school setting as well as bringing the school to the home. Parents need to be trained to be teachers of their own children. Families of low-SES children who are experiencing academic difficulties need

to be targeted in programs that are culturally sensitive and encourage motivation in parents to assist in their children's education.

Another solution to the problem of involving parents found in the literature relates to the types of activities parents can use at home. Activities such as reading to and with the child,making booklets from magazines,cooking together,shopping and talking to each other was suggested in numerous studies (e.g. Indiana State Department of Education, 1980, Des Moines Public Schools,Iowa,1980, Michigan State Board of Education,1984.) The writer chose to use a hands on approach to demonstrate various activities that can be used at home as part of the workshop program.

Another possible solution for involving parents with children's homework is to use the telephone to tape record messages (Marshall and Herbert,1981). This option the writer chose because it permits the parent to ask questions and to give feedback quickly if a problem arises. In the writer's location parents are usually single parents or two parents are working. Shift work is common as the economy is based on an industry that operates twenty-four hours. The telephone message system allows accessibility to the school in the evening.

Solution Strategy

The solution employed in this practicum involved ten first grade students. All students had been inconsistent in completing homework assignments. They had also been considered below grade level in reading.

In the introductory phase of the program there were four components. Students were tested using their reading series to determine chapter and grade level. Materials were developed to be sent home on a daily basis. The teacher sent homework each evening with the child. This consisted of spelling words and various supplemental worksheets. In addition children were permitted to bring home educational games from the classroom. Since the children were from lower-SES families they will also be permitted to bring home materials from the classroom such as construction paper and drawing materials.

A child managerial chart was established to record homework completion,accuracy and neatness(see Appendix H). The homework was checked on a daily basis. The results were entered on the computer based charts. At the end of the week each child received a copy of his or her individualized chart. This chart was to be taken

home and reviewed by the parent. Children received positive reward incentives(stickers.funny money etc.) for completion of work. As each child returned his or her homework they received a sticker as a reward. Children were allowed to choose the sticker and to place it on an enlarged version of the chart located on a bulletin board. At the end of the week when each child received his or her homework chart those children who had successfully completed their homework assignments for the week were able to choose from a prize bag such items as pencil cases,hair barrettes,books, small toys and other items.

Parents were contacted by the writer and the home environment was assessed using an adaptation of the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME).

Parent education consisted of a package of suggestions and resources to be implemented at home (see Appendix I). Parents were also invited to attend a workshop on understanding their child's developmental level. Since home visitation was a component of the practicum the information was given at home in the event of inability to attend the workshop.

Another aspect of the program was the implementation of a telephone recording system. On a

daily basis a tape was made by the writer recapping the homework assignment and the skills to be mastered. The answering machine was attached to the school's telephone. Parents and children were able call the school to review the homework assignment. Along with the assignment there was also a statement of encouragement. One of the advantages of this component is that if someone were having difficulty the parent could leave a message to arrange a conference. It also alerted the teacher early in the day that a particular student was having difficulty. The teacher was then able to focus on a particular skill for that child during the day. The machine was checked daily each morning for messages and frequency of calls.

The second phase of the practicum consisted of a continuation of the recorded telephone messages, the child managerial charting of homework and the positive reinforcement incentives for the children.

Parent education consisted of a second workshop on methods parents may employ in teaching their child at home. This included how to read a story and what questioning techniques may be employed. It would also help parents develop teaching techniques that would positively rather than punish their child's efforts.

Implementation again was monitored by home visitation. A third workshop focused on developmentally appropriate activities that parents and children could do together emphasizing that learning takes place not only at school or at home but in the community and it can be fun.

The final phase consisted of evaluating pupil progress through chapter checkpoints. Evaluation also consisted in examining the results from the managerial chart for homework. Parent involvement was evaluated by a behavioral checklist following the final home visitation. It was anticipated that this would take at least three weeks.

The writer was able to obtain a teacher incentive mini-grant through the Atlantic City Education Foundation. The ACEF is an organization supported by the business community to assist in helping to provide new programs in the school district. This grant made possible the purchase of the telephone answering machine, the reward incentives, supplies which the children could take home and educational games.

Report of Action Taken

The solution used in this practicum involved ten students and their parents in a first grade class. All of the students selected were having difficulty completing homework assignments. The students were also experiencing academic difficulties.

The writer met with the principal and teacher to review practicum objectives. There were for example some administrative details to pursue such as scheduling the workshops and use of facilities.

Since the writer received a grant for the practicum the writer was able to purchase for each child a special homework kit consisting of crayons, paste, scissors, and pencils. This would enable each child to have all the materials he or she might need to work at home. A special folder was made to place any worksheets or assignments in an organized fashion.

The writer also tried to involve others in the practicum. One teacher offered to have the children involved in a cooking lesson so that they could provide refreshments for the parent workshops. Another teacher offered to video tape the parent workshops. The principal offered to provide a film and childcare so

that the parents could attend the workshops.

The first parent workshop focused on introducing the practicum goals to the parents and an explanation of the process. The first workshop included a presentation on what the first grade child is like cognitively, socially and emotionally (see Appendix C). Parents were given a packet with brochures and other items such as library cards from the public library.

Parents were also given their child's homework kit and the telephone number of the "Homework Hotline" as it came to be called. After class the writer and teacher would record the day's homework on an answering machine. The telephone was separate from the main school phone and could remain intact during the day. Parents and students could call and leave a message.

As part of the introductory phase of the practicum the classroom teacher ,the writer and the computer specialist worked together to learn how to utilize the computer as a tool for record keeping. The classroom teacher became so impressed with the behavioral charts for the selected students and how effective it was to keep her records on the computer that she expanded the homework charts for everyone in the classroom.

The children were given rewards for homework that

was complete, neat and correct. The information would be entered into the computer by the writer and teacher so that at the end of the week the chart would be sent home (see Appendix H). Stickers were generally given for daily work. A computerized poster as well as special pencils or small toys were used as rewards.

Initial home visitation included administering the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment. The writer met individually with parents to discuss specific needs and to make recommendations. Many of the parents expressed a need for additional help with an older sibling.

The charting of homework with the reward incentives lasted throughout the three months of the practicum. The Homework hotline also continued throughout the duration of the practicum.

In the second phase of the practicum parents attended a workshop on how to use and make educational games (see Appendix D). The children also demonstrated some of the methods they were using in school such as learning vowels. They also gave a demonstration on positive actions and phrases to increase self-esteem. The parents then learned how to encourage their children in a positive way to do their homework.

In the next phase of the practicum the parent workshop centered on reading (see Appendix E). The parents were given a demonstration on how to read to their child. This included how to select an appropriate book, how to prepare the child for the story and then some suggestions for comprehension and sequencing skills.

Throughout the practicum the writer kept a weekly log (see Appendix J). The purpose of the log was to record any unexpected events or the success and failures of the week. Another use for the log was to record any parent concerns. Besides the homework project parents would discuss family problems or request medical or community services. The log served as a reminder to seek community assistance through information and referrals.

The final phase of the practicum consisted of evaluation. As one of the main purposes of the practicum was to improve reading through homework a posttest was administered utilizing the Ginn Reading Program Level test. It was expected that there would be a two level gain. Workshop evaluation was conducted after each session.

Chapter V

Results, Conclusions, Recommendations

Results

Objective one was measured by a tabulation over a four week period of those children who did not complete their homework and who were reading below grade level as stated in teacher records. The students were selected in consultation with the first grade classroom teacher. Ten children were selected. Five children returned homework that was fully completed twice per week, three children returned homework once per week and two children had not returned any homework that was complete.

The second objective which was to test the ten students' current reading level was met. The second objective was measured by the Ginn Reading Program Level test. All of the children were tested and found to be on the readiness level in reading.

The third objective was that the parents of the ten students would complete three workshops on how to assist their children with their homework. This objective was

met. Six of the ten parents attended all of the workshops that were held at a scheduled time in the school. Two parents attended part of the program in school. Two parents did not attend any of the workshops in school. All ten parents were able to complete the workshop component through the use of a video tape as well as home visitation by the writer to provide the information.

The third objective was measured by a parent evaluation form (see Appendix F). This objective was met and it was determined that the workshops were meeting the needs of the parents and that additional workshops would be appreciated.

The fourth objective which was that the writer will make three home visits to monitor the implementation of the program was met. Objective four was measured by the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME), a stanardized test.

Objective five which states that seven out of ten students would progress a minimum of two chapters in reading was met. Objective five was measured by the Ginn Reading Program Level Test. This objective was met not only by seven students but by ten students (see Appendix G).

The last objective was that seven out of ten students would successfully complete all homework assignments. The sixth objective was met with nine out of ten students successfully completing all homework assignments.

Conclusions

The first two objectives concerned the selection process of the ten children as part of the practicum. The teacher had initially considered referring half of the students for evaluations for learning disabilities. At the end of the practicum only two children were referred for testing and possible classification for learning disabilities.

Parent workshops were well received despite that work schedules prevented some parents from attending. This was compensated by video taping and the home visits. The workshops however brought parents together to share similar concerns and to learn from each other's success or failure. For one father who had recently gained custody of his son it was the first time he had ever been to the school. After the first workshop he not only returned to complete the two other workshops but

also came to attend conferences and to visit.

Parents were concerned about the pressures children have to succeed. Parents were happy as well as relieved to find out that each child develops at a different rate and just what a six year old is capable or not capable of doing. Several parents had very high expectations which made assisting with homework a frustating experience. Parents appeared to enjoy learning about various games that they could use at home with their child. It was also possible to do some "hands on" activities although time constraints limited this activity. After the first meeting nine children were able to obtain library cards, several parents were surprised to learn that they too could join the library.

Parents were also enthusiastic about what was going on in the classroom. Following the workshop on reading several parents said they never realized how much thought and preparation went into selecting a book to read. Most parents said that they read to their child at night but gave little thought to sequencing, comprehension or elaborating on vocabulary.

The fourth objective was that the writer would incorporate home visitation as part of the Practicum. The Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment

(HOME) was utilized. Of the ten children involved in the Practicum nine scored low on the Home. Areas of low Home scores included: provision for active stimulation, family participation in developmentally stimulating experiences and paternal involvement.

Provision for active stimulation is an area which deals with a child's participation in organized activities such as scouting, sports, recreational programs or hobbies. It should be noted that there are no recreational programs for children in this area of the city nor are there any latch key or after school programs.

The family participation in developmentally stimulating experiences refers to exposure to museums, theater and cultural experiences or even simple things like roller skating or playing catch with a ball. This was also an area of weakness. Paternal involvement was low due to the fact that there were only two intact families.

One of the main goals was to improve reading achievement. Four children advanced three levels in reading. Four children advanced four levels in reading. Two children advanced five levels in reading. The teacher was so impressed by how much the students had

improved that she recommended as a member of the curriculum committee that similar programs be implemented throughout the district.

The last objective stated that seven of the ten students would successfully complete all homework assignments. Nine of the ten successfully completed all homework. The children enjoyed handing in their homework and having it entered into the computerized charts. They also enjoyed the rewards. They also knew that at the end of the week their parents would receive a letter informing them of their progress. They looked forward to receiving a reward poster if they had a successful week. The students also utilized the Hotline. They would also leave messages if they were absent or having difficulty.

There were several interesting developments. Teachers in other schools heard about the Hotline and two teachers liked the idea so much that they implemented it for their students. A principal requested that the writer give a workshop so that the program would be implemented in his school. Plans are being made to expand the program for the next school year.

An unexpected outcome of the practicum involved the

use of computers in the classroom. The classroom teacher had been using the computer in her class for computer assisted instruction. As a result of the practicum and working with the classroom teacher and the computer specialist a system of classroom management and record keeping was established. This enables the teacher to spend more time teaching.

Recommendations

The writer has four specific recommendations based on the results of this Practicum. First,that students receive positive reinforcement for completion of their homework. Secondly, that parents are taught to assist their young child with various teaching strategies to be employed at home. Third that communication on a regular basis between home and school is essential. This could be accomplished through the weekly charts or notes that were sent home or through a telecommunications system . My final recommendation is that the use of computers be pursued in the classroom not only for instruction but to eliminate some of the time teachers spend with their paperwork and to free them for additional instructional time.

Dissemination

The results of the practicum were shared in several ways. Initially the practicum results were submitted to the Superintendent of Schools, who then made it available to other administrators. The writer has been asked by another administrator to present the practicum to his faculty to see if some of the ideas may be incorporated into that school's program.

The writer submitted a copy of the practicum to the faculty and administration in the school where the practicum took place. It will be placed in the teacher's room and used as a handbook for incorporating the program in the school.

The writer also submitted a copy of the practicum to the Atlantic City Education Foundation which partially funded the practicum through their teacher incentive mini-grant project.

References

Bercovici,A. & Feshbach, N. (1973) Teaching styles of mothers of "successful" readers and "problem" readers in the first grade. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of American Educational Research Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 076 962)

Blai,Boris. (1985). Parents "always" matter in education. (Report No. PS015095) Pennsylvania. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No.ED 256490)

Des Moines Public Schools.(1980). Home is for helping. (Report No. UDO 22933). Iowa. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 241609)

Ellis,Barbara H. (1983). Implementation assessment of a parent involvement program and the relationship between level of implementation and child achievement. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 231531)

Goldenberg,C. (1984). Low-income Hispanic parents' contributions to the reading achievement of their first-grade children. Paper presented at the Meeting of the Evaluation Network/Evaluation Research Society. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 264081)

Halasa, Ofelia. (1983). Reading impact project. (Report No. UDO 23170). Cleveland: Ohio Department of Research and Analysis. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 236284)

Hoffman, Stevie. (1982). Parent's teaching strategies with children learning to read and write: before and after classroom instruction. (Report No. CS 006696). Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 218581)

Indiana State Department of Public Instruction. (1980). Building blocks: reading readiness activities. Parent participation-a formula for success. (Report No. CS006078). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 201981)

Lamme,L. & Olmsted,P. (1976). Family reading habits and children's progress in reading.(Report No. CS00 3476). Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 138963)

Marshall,Gail & Herbert,Martin. (1981). Recorded telephone messages: a way to link teachers and parents.(Report No. PS0 12570). Washington,D.C.: Department of Education.(ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 211200)

Miller,W.H.(1973) A final report on a longitudinal study of certain home environmental faactors and children's primary grade reading achievement. Illinois State University. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No.ED 084 004)

Moxley-Haegert,L. & Serbin,L. (1983) Developmental education for parents of delayed infants: effects on parental motivation and children's development. Child Development, 54, 1324-1331.

Parkinson,C., Wallis,S.M., Prince,J.& Harvey,D. (1982) Research note: rating the home environment of school age children:a comparision with general cognitive index and school progress. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 23, 329-333.

Searls,Evelyn.(1982). Parents as tutors---It works. Reading Psychology, 3 , 117-29.

Seigner,R. (1983). Parents' educational expectations and children's academic achievements: a literature review. Merrill Palmer Quaterly, 29, 1-23.

Shea,J.J. & Hanes, M.L. (1977). The relationship between measures of home environment and school achievement of Follow Through children. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 144 955)

Steinert,Y.E., Campbell,S.B.,& Kiely,M.C. (1981) A comparision of maternal and remedial teaching styles with good and poor readers. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 14, 38-42.

Strom,R., Griswald,D. & Slaughter,H. (1981) Parental background: does it matter in parent education? Child Study Journal, 10, 243-260.

Swick,Kevin & Land,Betty Lou. (1984) The long term influence of a kindergarten parent involvement program. Lexington,KY:Annual Conference of the Southern Association on Children Under Six. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 241177)

van Doorninck,W. J., Caldwell, B.M., Wright,C.,& Frankenburg, W.K. (1981). The relationship between twelve month home stimulation and school achievement. Child Development, 52, 1080-1083.

Wade,Benny. (1980) Parent education: does it make a difference? Nashville,TN : Annual meeting of the Southeastern Regional Conference of the International Reading Association.(ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 190990)

APPENDIX A

Faculty Questionnaire

Directions: Evaluate your reading program on each item listed below by circling the appropriate number on the four point rating scale.

1- I am satisfied with this
2-This needs some improvement
3-This needs much improvement
4-This is non-existent,or nearly so

1. Pattern of organizing within the classroom for reading instruction	1 2 3 4
2. Time available for reading instruction	1 2 3 4
3. Materials available for use in the program	1 2 3 4
4. Library books and other supplementary material	1 2 3 4
5. Extent to which students enjoy reading	1 2 3 4

6. Extent to which testing program assists in reading instruction 1 2 3 4

7. Extent to which parents are interested in reading program 1 2 3 4

8. Extent to which parents are involved in the program 1 2 3 4

9. Extent to which homework assignments are completed 1 2 3 4

10. Extent to which materials are available to be sent home 1 2 3 4

11. Extent to which parents are trained to assist in home instruction 1 2 3 4

12. Extent to which assignments are individualized for students 1 2 3 4

13. Extent to which children receive supervision after school hours. 1 2 3 4

14. Extent to which principal provides support 1 2 3 4

15. Extent to which you are familiar with the overall goals of the reading program 1 2 3 4

Results of Faculty Questionnaire

1=I am satisfied with this
2=This needs some improvement
3=This needs much improvement
4=This is non-existent or nearly so

(1) Pattern of organizing within the classroom for reading instruction

1 - 20%
2 - 70%
3 - 10%
4 -

(2) Time available for reading instruction

1 - 10%
2 - 60%
3 - 30%
4 -

(3) Materials available for use in the program

1 - 40%
2 - 30%
3 - 20%
4 - 10%

(4) Library books and other supplementary material

1 - 10%
2 - 30%
3 - 40%
4 - 20%

(5) Extent to which students enjoy reading

1 - 30%
2 - 50%
3 - 20%
4 -

(6) Extent to which testing program assists in reading instruction

1 - 70%
2 - 20%
3 - 10%

(7) Extent to which parents are interested in reading program

1 -
2 - 20%
3 - 30%
4 - 50%

(8) Extent to which parents are involved in the program

1 -
2 - 10%
3 - 70%
4 - 20%

(9) Extent to which homework assignments are completed

1 - 10%
2 - 10%
3 - 60%
4 - 20%

(10) Extent to which materials are available to be sent home

1 -
2 - 10%
3 - 30%
4 - 60%

(11) Extent to which parents are trained to assist in home instruction

1 -
2 - 10%
3 - 30%
4 - 60%

(12) Extent to which assignments are individualized for students

1 - 10%
2 - 10%
3 - 40%
4 - 40%

(13) Extent to which children receive supervision after school hours

1 - 10%
2 - 60%
3 - 20%
4 - 10%

(14) Extent to which principal provides support

1 - 50%
2 - 30%
3 - 10%
4 - 10%

(15) Extent to which you are familiar with the overall goals of the reading program

1 - 70%
2 - 30%
3 -
4 -

APPENDIX C

WORKSHOP AGENDA I

I. Introduction

A. Ice breaker introduction

B. Explanation of goals and objectives

II. Parent packet review

III. The six-seven year old child

A. Physical development

B. Social/Emotional Development

C. Cognitive Development

IV. Activities

A. Demonstration of homework hotline

B. Distribution of positive reward stickers for home

C. Making of a vocabulary pin wheel

V. Summary

VI. Evaluation

APPENDIX D

WORKSHOP II AGENDA

I. Introduction

II. Cooking demonstration

Learning as an everyday adventure

III. Hands on activities

Making games for use at home

Art supplies

IV. Community Resources

V. Summary

VI. Evaluation

APPENDIX E

WORKSHOP III AGENDA

I. Introduction

II. Guest storyteller

III. Small group exercise

What ideas did I get? What was different?

IV. Role playing

Parent/child doing homework

Improving listening skills

Positive vs.negative feedback

V. Summary

VI. Evaluation

APPENDIX F

PARENT WORKSHOP EVALUATION FORM 64

Evaluation Form

Please complete this form so that we may know how to serve you better. Circle one of the following.

1 = excellent 3 = satifactory

2 = good 4 = unsatisfactory

1. Information was useful to the parent. 1 2 3 4

2. Presentation was clear and concise. 1 2 3 4

3. Materials were useful. 1 2 3 4

4. Facility was adequate. 1 2 3 4

5. Suggestions for other workshops

APPENDIX G

PRE AND POST TEST TABLE

Reading Level

Subject	Pretest	Posttest
1	Readiness	Preprimer 3
2	Readiness	Preprimer 2
3	Readiness	Preprimer 2
4	Readiness	Preprimer 3
5	Readiness	Primer
6	Readiness	Preprimer 2
7	Readiness	Primer
8	Readiness	Preprimer 3
9	Readiness	Preprimer 2
10	Readiness	Preprimer 3

APPENDIX H

HOMEWORK MANAGERIAL CHARTS

COMPLETE

Name	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

NEAT

Name	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

CORRECT

Name	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

APPENDIX I

PARENT INFORMATION PACKET

Parent Packet

Agenda

Application for Public Library cards

Art materials

Rewards for use at home

Sample of homework managerial charts

APPENDIX J

WEEKLY LOG

WEEK_____

SUCCESSFUL METHODS:

UNSUCESSFUL METHODS:

STUDENT CONCERNS:

TEACHER CONCERNS:

PARENT CONCERNS: